



A STUDY OF AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN RELATION TO RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN DISTRICT BHOPAL

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ABSTRACT

School Education plays a significant role in shaping the destiny of the children and makes them good citizens of the nations. Education is the right of every child in the country and through Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, the quality elementary education has to be ensured for every child. A large number of elementary schools were opened under DPEP and SSA in all corners of the country. But, whether in reality the education is available and accessible to children? The study was conducted to explore the position of availability and accessibility of elementary education to children in relation to RTE (Right to Education) Act. The aggregate sample of 600 respondents was drawn from Bhopal District. A self-made validated questionnaire was used for assessment of Availability and Accessibility of elementary education and discussion were made with all stake-holder. The study has brought out that there is no significant difference on availability of elementary education to male and female children in rural and urban areas but there is significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education in rural and urban students, rural and urban teachers and rural and urban parents. It was also found that there is no significant difference in the perception of students, headmasters, teachers and parents on their perception towards accessibility of elementary education.

KEY WORDS: Availability, Accessibility and Right to Education.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of liberalization, globalization and privatization, education plays a significant role in the multifaceted development of a nation and its people. Education is also seen as the most influential agent of modernization apart from industrialization and urbanization in India (Singh 1973). A number of programmes to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education have been initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India. Some of the important initiatives have been the Operation Blackboard (1986), Non-formal Education Scheme (1986), the Shiksha Karmi Project (1987), Mahila Samakhya (1989), Lok Jumbish (1992), the District Primary Education Programme (1994), the Mid-day Meal Scheme (2005) and the Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan (2001), which aimed at completion of eight years of schooling by all children between 6-14 years, by 2010. Then the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education (RTE) Act was passed by the Indian Parliament on 4th August 2009 and was enforced in India from April 1, 2010 which serves as a building block to ensure that every child has the right to be guaranteed with quality elementary education.

Right to Education (RTE) Act was heralded as a historic movement, as for the first time quality norms for a range of issues including infrastructure, teacher education and training, classroom transactions and assessments were laid down. Four years on, however, as the deadline of March 31, 2013 for meeting these norms has come and gone. The Act seems suspended in a vacuum, as policy and planning appear to operate in a world of their own, often parallel to the mandate of the Act. Therefore, there is need to examine the implementation of this Act and a study was conducted after the deadline of RTE Act and discussion were made with all concerned stakeholders to get their views and suggestions for improvements in Bhopal district of Madhya Pradesh.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the position of availability of elementary education to children in relation to RTE.
- To study the access to elementary education to children in relation to RTE.
- To suggest measures for improvement of availability and accessibility of elementary education to all children.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- There is no significant interaction of gender and location on the perception of availability in the students of elementary education.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban Headmasters.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban Teachers.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban Parents.
- There is no significant interaction of gender and location on the perception

of accessibility in the students of elementary education.

- There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban Headmasters.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban Teachers.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban Parents.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study descriptive survey method was employed.

TOOLS USED

Self-constructed and validated Questionnaires were used for assessment of Availability and Access to elementary education. Forty items were designed in affirmative form in three point attitudinal scale- Fully agree, Partially agree and Disagree on the two components of Right to education i.e. Availability and Accessibility of elementary education on the norms of RTE. The tools were developed for administration on headmasters, teachers, students and parents.

SAMPLE

The sample of the study was drawn from the rural and urban government elementary schools of Bhopal district of Madhya Pradesh state. The distribution of sample is given in table no.1

TABLE NO. 1
Distribution of the sample according to Area and Stakeholders

S. No.	Elementary Schools	Students		Headmasters	Teachers	Parents
		Girls	Boys			
1	Urban Schools	100	100	20	40	40
2	Rural Schools	100	100	20	40	40
TOTAL		200	200	40	80	80

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE USED

The data obtained through the administration of questionnaire and official information was classified amongst different pre-decided categories like gender, locale, group etc., and was put to statistical treatment by way of computing the statistical measures, like mean, standard deviation, t-value, t-test, level of significance and ANOVA.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Hypotheses-1: There is no significant interaction of gender and location on the perception of availability in the students of elementary education.

Table No. 2
Mean and Standard deviation of perception of availability of Elementary Education in rural and urban students

Source of variance	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F-ratio
GENDER (A)	1.210	1	1.210	.019
LOCATION (B)	4747.210	1	4747.210	76.05*
INTERACTION (AXB)	62.210	1	62.210	1.933
WITHIN-ERROR	12788.280	396		
TOTAL	175989.91			

*Significant

GENDER (A):-The interaction effect of gender on perception of availability of elementary education reveals the F-ratio for difference in mean gain scores of male and female is .019 against the table value 3.86 at .05 level of significance. So, the obtained value is less than the table value (.019<3.86). Hence, the result indicates that male and female students do not differ significantly with regard to perception of availability of elementary education to them.

LOCATION (B):- The interaction effect of location on perception of availability of elementary education reveals the F-ratio for difference in mean gain scores of urban and rural students is 76.05 against the table value 3.86 at 0.05 level of significance. So, the obtained value is more than the table value. (76.05>3.86). Hence, the result indicates that urban and rural students differ significantly with regard to perception of availability of elementary education.

INTERACTION EFFECT (AXB): It was observed from the table no. 3 that the F-ratio for the interaction among gender and location is 1.933 against the table value 3.86 at .05 level of significance. So the obtained value is less than the table value (1.933<3.86). Hence, the result indicates that the gender and location do not interact significantly with each other regard to perception of availability of elementary education.

Thus the hypothesis, "There is no significant interaction of gender and location on the perception of availability in the students of elementary education." is accepted.

Hypothesis -2: There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban headmasters.

Table No. 4
Comparison of Mean, SD, t-value, significance of perception of availability between rural and urban Headmasters.

Variable	Group	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	Calculated t-value
Availability	Urban Headmasters	20	50.80	7.13	.371*
	Rural Headmasters	20	50.05	5.56	

*Table t-value 2.02 and hence t value is not significant

Observation of table no. 4 indicates that the obtained t-value 0.371 is less than the Tabled t-value of 2.02 for the degree of freedom 38 at 0.05 level, therefore we can conclude that the urban Headmasters and rural Headmasters do not differ in perception of availability of elementary education. Thus the hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban Headmasters" is accepted.

Hypothesis-3: There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban teachers.

Table No. 5
Comparison of Mean, SD, t-value, significance of perception of availability between rural and urban teachers.

Variable	Group	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	Calculated t-value
Availability	Urban teachers	40	52.87	5.48	2.89*
	Rural teachers	40	49.30	5.58	

* Table t-value 1.99 and hence t value is significant

Observation of table no. 5 indicates that the obtained t-value 2.89 is greater than the Table t-value of 1.99 for the degree of freedom 78 at 0.05 level, therefore we can conclude that the urban teachers and rural teachers are different in perception of availability of elementary education. Thus the hypothesis, "There is no signifi-

cant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban Teachers" is rejected.

Hypothesis-4: There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban parents.

Table No. 6
Comparison of Mean, SD, t-value, significance of perception of availability between rural and urban Parents.

Variable	Group	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	Calculated t-value
Availability	Urban teachers	40	55.02	4.25	4.69*
	Rural teachers	40	48.37	7.88	

* Table t-value 1.99 and hence t value is significant

Observation of table no.6 indicates that the obtained t-value 4.69 is greater than the table t-value of 1.99 for the degree of freedom 78 at 0.05 level, therefore we can conclude that the urban parents and rural parents differ in perception of availability of elementary education. Thus the hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of elementary education between rural and urban Parents" is rejected.

Hypothesis-5: There is no significant interaction of gender and location on the perception of accessibility in the students of elementary education.

Table No. 7
Mean and Standard deviation of perception of accessibility of Elementary Education in rural and urban students

Group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Gender	Male	200	52.45
	Female	200	53.39
Location	Urban	200	53.19
	Rural	200	52.66

Table No. 8
Summary of analysis of variance (2x2) factorial designs

Source of variance	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	Significance
GENDER (A)	88.360	1	88.360	1.80	NotSignificant
LOCATION(B)	28.09	1	28.09	.573	NotSignificant
INTERACTION (AXB)	49.00	1	49.00	1.95	NotSignificant
WITHIN-ERROR	9952.300	396			
TOTAL	10117.75				

GENDER (A):- The interaction effect of gender on perception of accessibility of elementary education reveals the F-ratio for difference in mean gain score of male and female is 1.80, against the table value 3.86 at .05 level of significance. So, the obtained value is less than the table value (1.80<3.86). Hence, the result indicates that male and female students do not differ significantly with regard to perception of accessibility of elementary education to them.

LOCATION (B):- The interaction effect of location on perception of accessibility of elementary education. Reveals the F-ratio for difference in mean gain scores of urban and rural students is 0.573 against the table value 3.86 at .05 level of significance. So, the obtained value is less than the table value. (0.573<3.86). Hence, the result indicates that urban and rural students do not differ significantly with regard to perception of accessibility of elementary education.

INTERACTION EFFECT (AXB):- It was observed from the table 4.8 that the F-ratio for the interaction among gender and location is 1.95 against the table value 3.86 at .05 level of significance. So the obtained value is less than the table value (1.95<3.86). Hence, the result indicates that the gender and location do not interact significantly with each other with regard to perception of accessibility of elementary education.

Thus the hypothesis "There is no significant interaction of gender and location on the perception of accessibility in the students of elementary education" is accepted

Hypothesis-6:- There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban Headmasters.

Table No. 9

Comparison of Mean, SD, t-value and significance of perception of accessibility between rural and urban Headmasters.

Variable	Group	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	Calculated t-value
Availability	Urban teachers	20	53.50	3.03	0.305*
	Rural teachers	20	53.05	5.86	

*Table t-value 2.02 and hence t value is not significant

Table no 9 indicates that the obtained t-value -305 is less than the Table t-value 1.99 for the degree of freedom at 0.05 level, therefore we can conclude that there is no significant difference between urban Headmasters and rural Headmasters in perception of accessibility of elementary education.

Hypothesis-7:- *There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban teachers.*

Table No. 10

Comparison of Mean, SD, t-value and significance of perception of accessibility between rural and urban Teachers

Variable	Group	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	Calculated t-value
Availability	Urban teachers	40	54.62	3.82	0.660*
	Rural teachers	40	55.25	4.60	

*Note:- Table t-value 1.99 and hence t value is not significant

Table no 10 indicates that the obtained t-value is .660 is less than the table t-value for the degree of freedom 78 at 0.05 level, therefore we can conclude that urban teachers and rural teachers do not differ in perception of accessibility of elementary education. Thus the hypothesis, "There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban Teachers" is accepted.

Hypothesis 8:- *There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban Parents.*

Table No. 11

Comparison of Mean, SD, t-value, and significance of perception of accessibility between rural and urban parents

Variable	Group	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	Calculated t-value
Availability	Urban teachers	40	53.85	4.52	.316*
	Rural teachers	40	53.55	3.95	

*Table t-value 1.99 and hence t value is not significant

Table no 11 indicates that the obtained t-value 0.316 is less than the table t-value for the degree of freedom 78 at 0.05 level, therefore we can conclude that the urban Parents and rural Parents do not differ in perception of accessibility of elementary education. Thus, the hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the perception of accessibility of elementary education between rural and urban Parents" is accepted.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

(A) Availability of Elementary Education:

The findings of the position of accessibility of elementary Education to children from the perception of Students, Headmasters, Parents and Teachers are:-

(i) **Perception of students:-** In perception of male and female students the availability of elementary education to them did not differ significantly. But at the same time a significant difference has been noted on availability of elementary education between rural and urban students. It may be due to a reason that DPEP/SSA had ensured the opening of primary and upper-primary schools within walking distance and admissions in these schools were done without any gender discrimination. But the children in rural areas may feel difficulty for availing elementary education in reaching school due to lack of transport facilities etc.

(ii) **Perception of headmasters:-** In perception of the Headmasters there was no significant difference on availability of elementary education to the children in rural and urban areas as the elementary schools are opened on the set norms of SSA/DPEP which try to remove regional disparities and the headmasters work for implementation of the state policies.

(iii) **Perception of teachers:-** The teachers perceived that there was no significant difference on the availability of elementary education to the children in rural and urban areas. As the schools in rural areas are established by government agencies (like state government, tribal welfare department, SSA etc.)

only and private agencies do not come forward while in urban areas elementary schools are established by private agencies also with better infrastructure (building, furniture etc.) which create some difference on availability.

(iv) **Perception of parents:-** The parents also perceived a significant difference on availability of elementary education in rural and urban areas of Bhopal district. A broader choice of elementary schools was found available in urban areas to the parents for their wards and transport facilities are also available to different schools at their door step.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference on availability of elementary education to male and female children in views of the rural and urban headmasters but there is significant difference in availability of elementary education in the perception of rural and urban students, rural and urban teachers and rural and urban parents.

(B) Accessibility of Elementary Education:

The findings of the position of accessibility of elementary education to children from the perception of students, headmasters, parents and teachers are:-

(i) **Perception of students:-** In perception of male and female students the accessibility of elementary education to them did not differ significantly. It was also found that urban and rural students do not differ significantly with regard to perception of accessibility of elementary education because school access has been expanded physically and economically.

(ii) **Perception of headmasters:-** In perception of the headmasters there was no significant differences on accessibility of elementary education to children in rural and urban areas as now-a-days schools do not make any distinction in admission based on sex, race, colour, language, religion or any status.

(iii) **Perception of teachers:-** The teacher perceived that there was no significant difference on accessibility of elementary education to the children in rural and urban areas as there has been significant spatial and numeric expansion of elementary education.

(iv) **Perception of Parents:-** The parents perceived that there was no significant difference on accessibility of elementary education to the children in rural and urban areas because flexible school timings, flexible academic cycles and institutional flexibility has improved the accessibility of elementary education to them.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the perception of students, headmasters, teachers and parents on accessibility of elementary education as school access has been expanded physically and economically and schools do not make any distinction in admissions based on sex, race, colour, language, religion or social status. Flexible school timings, flexible academic cycles and institutional flexibility have further improved the accessibility of elementary education to the children.

SUGGESTIONS BASED ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. The provision of pre-school education should be regarded as a permanent feature of the school system and of the overall development strategy so that it could strengthen the process of universalization and could provide a firm base for elementary education.
2. Looking into specific existing situation of elementary education, disparity between male and female education may be further narrowed down. The government has been pursuing policy in favour of female education by giving privilege to rural areas. A universal motivational campaign should be launched in rural areas to attract girl children to attend schools by providing amenities in the school and free or low cost transport facilities.
3. It is recommended that multi-pronged development strategy be evolved by bringing about qualitative improvement in the system. It is recommended that existing facilities in the government schools in urban as well as rural areas be upgraded in order to accommodate more children. The schools should be spacious, comfortable, well-equipped with child friendly study materials and well-staffed so that they could provide quality education and compete with private institutions.
4. It is recommended that dangerous unsafe buildings be demolished and replaced by new ones. All buildings be properly looked after and maintained in a planned manner. Even community may be involved in minor repair, mud plastering and white washing of the building.
5. It is recommended that at least comfortable and durable mats be provided to all primary schools in the province.
6. Basic amenities like drinking water, electricity, and toilet are essential for the smooth running of the instructional programme of the school, but these essentials should also be maintained properly.
7. Provision of Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS) and Assistants should be made in

elementary schools.

CONCLUSION

Government has enacted and implemented the Act in the right spirit towards providing quality elementary education to all. Most of the investigated schools are able to fulfill basic infrastructure except a few but with regard to curriculum, accessibility, teachers' training and other related issues they are lagging behind. The observation and findings from the interview and questionnaire show a wide gap between what was expected and what has so far been done. The findings show that the noble objective of the right of every child to education can be achieved by collective efforts of all the stakeholders. There is a need for coordination, with strong political will and commitment, between the central and state government agencies. Inaction a law alone cannot guarantee the right to education in the country. The stakeholders such as, teachers, head of the institutions, parents, non-government organizations, and key persons of society can collectively make quality education available and accessible to every child under the overall umbrella of the central and state governments.

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